



BUZZWORD

The Newsletter of the Norfolk Beekeepers' Association

April/May 2021

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Next issue in June

All articles, events and things of interest to the beekeeping world should be sent to the Editor by **24th May 2021** at:

buzzwordnbka@gmail.com

Chairman's Buzzwords

Trevor Nash



First, I would like to welcome the Bishop of Norwich the Rt Reverend Graham Usher as one of the Vice Presidents of our association. As many of you will know he is an experienced beekeeper and has several hives in the Bishop's Palace Gardens, which he tends himself with his son, and I recommend that you take advantage of the open days there to see them (once we are allowed). I very much hope that he will be able to attend a couple of our meetings when we are able to meet again (for more, see p5).

Our weather can certainly be very unpredictable! As I write this article (April 5th), snow is falling. I did my first inspection last Tuesday March 30th and the temperature was 22 degrees! What a difference!

I was happy to find that my bees had survived the winter. They still had adequate stores and were building up okay. This can be a tricky period for the bees as they can easily run out of stores, particularly when we get cold snaps as we have as I write and they are unable to go out and forage. Regular checks are needed to ensure that they have sufficient stores.

The new apiary site is moving forward. We took delivery of the portakabin and container in February. They will be moved from the farm to the field where the apiary will be situated in April/May (please see photos on Facebook members' page). We have been given two colonies of bees from one of our members and hope to move them to the site by the end of April. My thanks to our member for this generous offer.

I would like to also give my thanks to Dina & Jamie Hambro for all the help they have given to us by letting us set the apiary up on their land and offering so much assistance when the equipment was delivered. The site at their farm in Coston is excellent and, when we eventually get to meet up there, I am sure you will find it to be a splendid venue for our new teaching apiary.

Hopefully, if things continue to go in the right direction, we may be able to open it up this summer. We will keep you updated with the progress.

It has been good to share in the recent Zoom lectures organised by both WNKLB & NBKA. We have had some very interesting talks. More are arranged and we are looking to organise a few more over the next few months.

As we are not able to meet up for any demos at the moment, there may be some new beekeepers who would like some help and advice. If you have any questions, please let us know and we would be happy to help you. Last year we had a question and answer series in *Buzzword* and we are happy to carry this on again this year. Please contact the Editor (buzzwordnbka@gmail.com) and he will arrange for you to get an answer within a couple of days and then publish it in *Buzzword*. Alternatively, if you need to speak to someone and get an immediate response, please contact our secretary Garry Bowler by email (secretarynbka@gmail.com) and he will direct someone to get in contact with you. Best wishes, Trevor (chairnbka@gmail.com)

OBITUARY

Dr Ian Gibson MP, Vice President NBKA

It is with sadness that we record the death of one of our Vice Presidents, Ian Gibson.

Ian was well known for his contribution to both politics and science but he also got involved with many other causes. Amongst them was beekeeping. Ian never was a beekeeper, but from the time that he became involved he took more than just a passing interest in NBKA. He attended members' meetings and even President's Quizzes but his interest was not just bees at a Norfolk level but at a national level.

In the 2000s bees were going through a difficult phase in terms of health problems, with the threat of a reduction in funding to beekeeping from central government, which would have been to the detriment of bee health and beekeeping. The BBKA executive of the time set out to mount a campaign and Tim Lovett, BBKA Chairman at the time and a past student of Ian's, recruited him to the cause. BBKA organised a petition on a national scale of some 143,000 signatures to highlight the problems, which resulted in a march down Whitehall, and the petition being delivered to No. 10.

Beekeeping research

In January 2009 a document was published, *Honey Bee Health Research Concepts**, which laid out the basis and costings for areas of beekeeping research. Ian was involved in the structure of this document and the places to direct it to.

For his contribution to the work, Ian was made an Honorary Fellow of the BBKA.

We are grateful to Ian for his contribution to beekeeping, and we extend our deepest sympathy to his family at this sad time.

Paul Metcalf, NDB, President



A photo of Ian Gibson (left back), Tim Lovett and others on the door step of No. 10 presenting the petition.

*The document is still available on the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs website: <https://bit.ly/2QfwOcG>

The Secretary Matters

Garry Bowler

Well, the warmer weather came and went so, as I write, I am getting impatient for it to return. I know some of my colonies have come through pretty weak so I am concerned.



Last year I was starting to think I should reduce the number of colonies I have but I hadn't reached a decision. Looks like the decision might be being made for me; you should be careful what you wish for I suppose.

Thank you so much to those members who have responded to my requests for help for new or potential beekeepers. I receive emails on a fairly regular basis from people interested in taking up beekeeping, new to beekeeping or new to the area. Lockdown restrictions have made it difficult for these to get an idea of what is involved.

I am very grateful for the help that has been offered by members local to the new and potential beekeeper to help them work out whether it is something they really want to do. I am a little wary of sending these requests, offering help to someone can turn into more than we bargain for so I do fully understand if anyone would rather not get involved.

The talks we have held via Zoom seem to have gone pretty well. Not the same as gathering together for a chat over a cup of tea but at least we are able to hold meetings in this way. As we don't need to travel and neither do our speakers, it gives us more flexibility. We can join with WNKLBA members to hear talks either of us has arranged and we can get speakers from much further afield. Outside speakers are also cheaper because they aren't travelling! It seems a good idea to continue to use Zoom in the future, certainly for when the weather isn't great for travelling. The future may see a mixture of actual and virtual talks, one for us to consider.

A quick note on Zoom

NBKA has a Zoom subscription that allows for up to 100 to attend a meeting (although any number can register for a meeting). We have the option to increase the capacity to 300 if greater numbers wish to attend. There is an extra cost for this and we have absolutely no issue covering this as we need to. We would, of course, be delighted if we had audiences of well over 100. However, I think you would agree that paying the extra unnecessarily is not best use of our funds. So, please could I ask that, if you have registered for a talk but then find you are unable to join, you either deregister or drop me a quick email to let me know.

Useful resource:

Several online beekeeping events are available (some charge, others are free) to keep you entertained through to the summer and beyond: <http://bit.ly/3a43XPH>.

Photo: Tim Lovett

Norfolk Natterings

Jeff Rounce, BSc

This is an article from the *British Bee Journal* from March 1997, in which the late Jeff Rounce talks about the idea of using Oil of Wintergreen, which is a naturally occurring substance and was reportedly a homeopathic remedy but, unlike homeopathy, has some conventional science behind it. By kind permission of Pat Marshall (his daughter).

So far, winter seems to have treated us not too badly, we had a little snow at the beginning of last month, but now, at the beginning of February, it is milder and raining. Unless something happens in the next two months, we in this part of the country, will find ourselves desperately short of water. The rainfall last year amounted to only about 75% of normal, while that for last month was only 18%. With an increase in the amount extracted for irrigating agricultural and horticultural crops I fear we are likely to have water restrictions this coming summer.

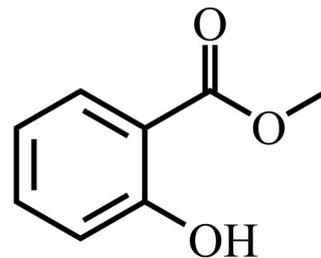
For my sins I have the task of compiling the Year Book for the Federation of Norfolk Beekeepers. I think this is the only set-up of this sort within the umbrella of BBKA. It started as a sort of mutual self-help organisation in the 1920s and comprises two associations, King's Lynn and District, the older of the two, and Norfolk.

When I first became a beekeeper just after the last war ended, there were a number of branch associations, all of which have ceased to be since the early 1950s, that is until fairly recently when an Association was formed in the Waveney Valley. For the uninitiated, the River Waveney forms, together with the Little Ouse, the southern boundary of Norfolk with Suffolk. Because of the ruling that associations having fewer than 100 members can only become affiliated to BBKA by paying fees as for 100 members, Waveney Bee Group became a branch association of Norfolk. I feel this ruling hits small associations very hard, unless they can latch onto a friendly neighbour.

The reason that I mentioned the Year Book is that we publish accounts of the past season for the four corners of the area; it is surprising how revealing they can be, especially as far as varying crop and weather conditions are concerned. Last year it would appear that the area around King's Lynn had a much better year than places further east and south. In some places the average take of honey was only a little down on last year, in others it was a very poor year.

The spread of Varroa seems to have been very rapid within the county. As I have said previously, it would appear that there is probably no part where it is not present. What is amazing is the rate of build-up in some colonies where it has appeared for the first time. Natural drops in some cases were very low, often in single figures, but with the introduction of medication, tens of thousands have been counted.

Talking of Varroa, which seems to be the "in" subject at present, there appears to be considerable interest in alternative treatments. Some of them, such as the homeopathic based are, I feel, non-starters. The one I am interested in is the use of Oil of Wintergreen. Actually this is a misnomer as I think there is now no such thing on the market; what passes as it is the synthetic substance which contains the active ingredient of Oil of Wintergreen, that is methyl salicylate. Readers as long in the tooth as I am may remember that Frow Mixture (see *Buzzword* Nov. 2020 p2) could only be used in November or February, when the temperature was high enough for the ingredients to vaporise, but not high enough for the bees to be actively flying, since it appeared to destroy the bees' sense of smell and leave them unable to detect robbers. At that time



The "skeletal formula" of methyl salicylate

there was no Folbex, the only treatments available in the summer months were sulphur dioxide, generated by putting roll sulphur in the lighted smoker, or methyl salicylate. The former was the very devil to use as, if my memory serves me right, it had to be given every other evening when all flying bees were home. This had to be done over a period of a fortnight or more. Altogether unsatisfactory as it was impossible to know whether the dose was of the correct strength; too much and the bees were killed, too little and it was ineffective.

Methyl salicylate was given either by putting it in aspirin bottles each with a cotton wool wick, or in honey jar lids filled with cotton wool and having perforated wads to ensure that the bees did not remove the contents. The containers were topped up as necessary and kept in the hives all summer, usually on the floorboards.

How methyl salicylate works

The theory behind the use of methyl salicylate was as follows: Acarine mites had to leave the tracheae of old bees before they died and enter the spiracles leading to the first pair of thoracic tracheae before the guard hairs had hardened sufficiently to prevent entry, this meant before the young bees were about three days old. Apparently the chemical worked by making the hive atmosphere so unpleasant that the mites stayed put and did not migrate. In light of present knowledge there is another possible answer and that is that, since Acarine mites probably detected young bees chemically, they were unable to distinguish between old and young bees and failed to parasitise young bees.

If that is so then it might be why methyl salicylate is successful, or so it seems, as a treatment for Varroa. Recent literature about the subject explains the preferential selection of drone larvae as being due to the ability of female Varroa mites to distinguish drone from worker larvae by chemical means. If the presence of methyl salicylate prevents this happening it might

(Continued on p5)

Plans for hives

Chris Coath

The Association has been asked by several new members and some established members if there are any plans for constructing hives. Although there are a few available commercially (for example through the BBKA shop), we cannot reproduce them here because of potential copyright infringement.

Cushman to the rescue

However, the Dave Cushman website has plans for many types of hive, including the modified National (<http://www.dave-cushman.net/bee/natdrawings.html>). Every hive part has its own set of plans and most people should be able to construct a hive from those plans.

Also on the site you can find the full Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) Advisory Leaflet 367, published in 1961, for the construction of a British National Hive. (<http://www.dave-cushman.net/bee/nat.html>)

Another good site is the Scottish Beekeepers Association. They have plans for National, Smith, WBC and Langstroth hives and a whole host of other plans and advice besides: <https://scottishbeekeepers.org.uk/advice/technical-data-sheets>

Plywood variations

Realising that it is often hard to get the correct width of wood in cedar (and especially in lockdown) the Editor has recently made some hives out of plywood and he is sharing the design of the brood box with us here. In the last issue (February, p4) George Male shared with us the wasp-proof underfloor entrance that would go well with this brood chamber.

Although plywood has the advantage of being cheap it is also fairly heavy and does not "breathe" as well as cedar. But nor does polystyrene/plastic so it's really just the weight that is a problem. If you don't shift them too much it will be fine.

Buying ply

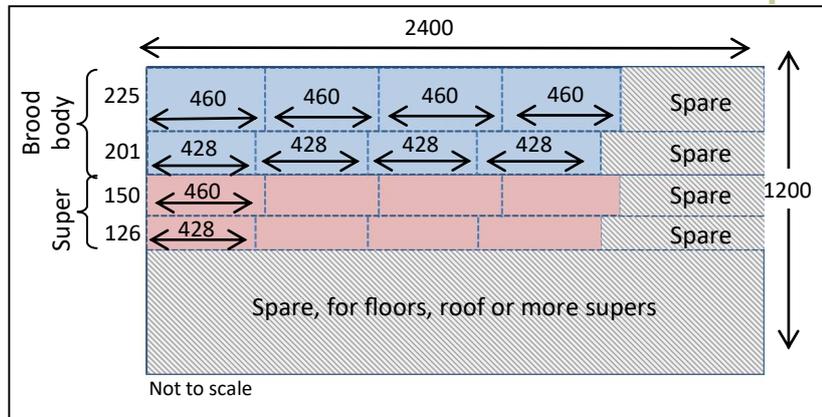
If you buy one sheet of exterior quality (marine) ply (2.4m x 1.2m or 8' x 4' in old money), you should have enough wood for two conventional hives, two supers, 2 floors and a roof (with a bit of extra 'scrap' wood). You can also use OSB (oriented strand board) and it is generally cheaper. There is very little difference in strength.

If you are tempted to use interior ply (or OSB) there is a danger of it delaminating. However, I have used interior ply and with several coats of varnish the first generation of home-made hives have completed 7 years outside without delaminating. I wouldn't recommend it but I seem to have got away with it.

Some larger DIY stores will cut sheet materials to size and the first few cuts may be free, although it may be worth paying for the additional ones to get everything done in one go.

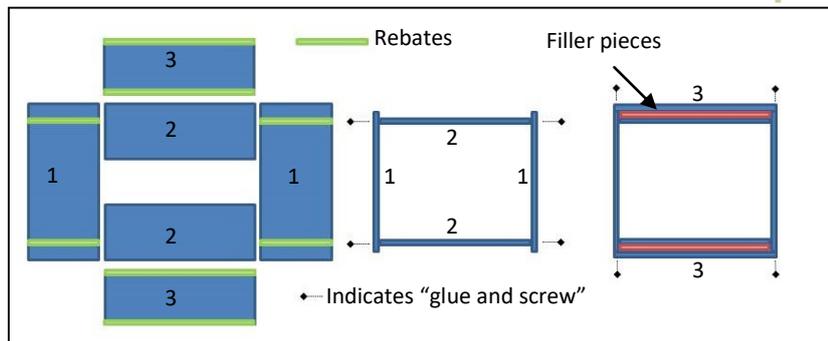
The first drawing is the cutting guide for the sheet of

ply. Note that the measurements given are for a standard-size British National hive. I used 18mm ply but standard plans call for 19mm, so you will need to compensate a bit depending on the width of your ply.



A bit of modification

Below I have shown the basic construction of a modified hive. If you don't wish to rebate the sides, you will need to compensate to reduce the length of the side pieces. The first one I constructed was simply glued and screwed. The next ones were rebated and they were slightly stronger. The important dimensions are that the hive should be 422 x 372mm on the inside and the outside dimensions are 460mm square.



I made a modification to increase the level of insulation in the hive as an experiment. I put an 'insulated chamber' on the sides where the hand holds usually go (see photos below). This requires the use of small fillers top and bottom and the use of extra side pieces that are rebated (No. 3 in the picture above). I screwed on han-



dles that stick out from the sides and made them low enough not to interfere with a roof. The insulated chamber is stealing from the polyhive idea and seems quite successful.

This is not a strict "how-to" instruction. I expect this may cause some confusion – just ask questions. Have a go and see what you can create using the plans on the websites or experiment and take photos and share them with the association – send them to the Editor. Good luck!

be an answer to our problems. Before any reader writes to say it is all poppycock, let me add that I used this substance as a treatment against Acarine in the 1950s during the summer, and it worked. I also used sulphur but found it too tedious.

The reason I mention this is that there has been at least one enquiry about Oil of Wintergreen, without, I suspect, the enquirer realising that this substance is no longer available, only its active ingredient. Before anyone asks from where it can be obtained let me say that it is readily available through any supplier of industrial chemicals; they can be found by looking through appropriate pages of Yellow Pages. It might be worth trying, 500ml costs £13.85, much less than Bayvarol. I would not think there are any undesirable effects of using it since Oil of Wintergreen is a naturally occurring substance. In any case a lot of it is used medicinally, the smell is lovely!

Bees in the News

Stay of execution for neonicotinoid use

A product containing the chemical thiamethoxam had been authorised for emergency use by the UK Government, because of a virus that affected sugar beet seeds. Now, because of the cold weather, that won't be needed. However, the Wildlife Trusts suggested that this does not change the underlying issue – that a neonicotinoid could be allowed in the future: <https://bbc.in/3sONhI9>

Extreme drone-using flamethrower

In this video, volunteers in China have equipped a drone (man-made) with a flamethrower to incinerate wasp nests. I hope they had the fire brigade on speed-dial: <https://bit.ly/3xocztX>

Scientists find neonicotinoid in rivers from flea treatment

Researchers have found widespread contamination of English rivers with two neurotoxic pesticides commonly used in veterinary flea products: fipronil and the neonicotinoid imidacloprid. The concentrations found often far exceeded accepted safe limits. They hypothesise that significant quantities of pesticide may be passing from treated pets to the environment via household drains: <https://bit.ly/3tQKwKH>

Carbs are good for baby bees

Two new studies are helping to paint a more detailed picture of a baby bee's ideal diet by focusing on solitary bees, such as mason bees. Researchers were surprised when the bee offspring fared best on high-carbohydrate diets – and, when given the choice, composed for themselves a much more carb-based diet than social bee workers gather for their brood: <https://bit.ly/2RU48Gm>

Vice President's Message

The Rt Revd Graham Usher

Thank you for the huge honour in appointing me as a Vice President of your Association. The role of Bishop of Norwich comes with a number of historic patronages and others that have come directly to me due to my interests. Your invitation brought me immense joy and is a particular privilege having lived in the county for less than two years.

My interest in insects began as a child, collecting and keeping caterpillars, and enjoying other aspects of natural history. Later, I studied ecology at university before going on to study theology. Much of my writing, and two books, has been around the



interface of nature and theology. About 12 years ago, when my children were of an age to be involved, we borrowed a hive of bees and slowly learnt how to look after them. My son became seriously interested and it has been great to share a hobby with him. We have kept on learning together, experimenting, collecting swarms, and enjoying our honey – and seeing others enjoy it too.

I moved my bees – then about 10 hives – from Dudley to Norwich when I became bishop here. Having hired a van, the hives were loaded on with mesh tops, strapped down and driven across the country. The famous Bishop's House Garden was a great location but we needed to position the hives carefully so that they didn't scare the visitors to the garden when it opens for Norfolk charities. The next day I drove back to Dudley and, as I pulled onto our drive, one bee slowly walked up the inside of the windscreen. It had obviously taken one sniff of Norwich and decided it preferred the Black Country!



Now, that's what I call marketing...

In June I take over being the lead bishop for the environment in the Church of England. This is an additional role and, as such, is part of the expectation that diocesan bishops take on a national portfolio. For Christians, caring for our single island planet home goes to the heart of our faith, not least because climate change is having a major impact on the lives of the poorest people in the world. This year, with COP26 meeting in Glasgow, gives a major opportunity to reach agreement on much reduced carbon emissions. I am also keen, as a Church, that we enhance biodiversity, including in our churchyards and glebe land. There is much to do, and it is a huge challenge, but we will all notice the impact in our lives if pollinators continue to decline.

I look forward to being involved in the Association's work and I send good wishes to all of its members.

+Graham Norvic:

Bishop of Norwich

Things 'For Sale'

For sale:

Over-wintered nucs, late 2020 (blue) queen, available now, 6 frames, £175

Orders taken for 2021 (white) queen nucs, ready June, £150

Contact : **Venetia Rist**, Gressenhall, 07710 753307

Arthur has some very fine-looking bespoke WBC hives made from oak, with a beaten copper roof. I have not seen them 'in the flesh' but the photographs look splendid. Arthur says they would make "a great gift for someone to last 50 years plus, including full WBC internal boxes and frames, 14 x 12 brood and super".

All enquiries to Arthur:

arthur_piotrowski@hotmail.com; 07547 210330.



Hive thefts: please be aware of reported thefts. If you are offered a nuc/hive from a 'strange' source please contact the Secretary.

Apiary sites offered

Sue has a 3-acre meadow and wondered whether anyone might like to leave a hive or two here? She lives in Upper Stoke just south of Norwich.

Fatherr Paul has been working hard to create a 'bee-friendly' garden and has created what sounds like an idyllic spot, part tropical, part cottage garden, with spring flowers, such as primroses, bluebells, and mainly perennial planting, such as cardoons, salvia, sedum, honeysuckle, fruit trees, rudbeckia, foxgloves and hollyhocks. It also has a fountain as a source of water, and there is a stream in the wood too. He lives near Swanton Abbott.

All enquiries in the first instance to the Secretary:

secretarynbka@gmail.com.

YouTube gems

Useful information from YouTube, all with George Male's seal of approval (for which the Editor thanks him).

Simple method for new beekeepers to split a hive
Use a double screened dividing board:

<https://bit.ly/2QtSWjm>

Swarm Management - Part 1 With Cotswold Bees:

<https://bit.ly/3vknTpa>

Making A Trap To Catch Honey Bee Swarms:

<https://bit.ly/3vhB75Z>

Local suppliers listing

Please bear in mind the advice of Public Health England for social distancing and essential journeys for everyone in the UK when buying or picking up supplies.

Applebee Apiary, Rockland St Mary

John Everett, Master Beekeeper

Large range of beekeeping equipment from Thornes and other suppliers. We breed and sell honey bees.

01508 538231 everettapplebee@hotmail.co.uk

<http://applebeeorchard.co.uk/>

Closed Sundays

Don Cooper, Roughton NR11 8QP; 01263 761517

5/6-Frame BS nucs available from £160;

Other sizes of nuc available to suit customer;

30lb Buckets of honey;

Advice on "all things bees"

Glebelands Apiary, Rocklands St Mary NR14 7BX

Peter Beckley, Thornes agent (reportedly the longest serving in the UK). 01508 480262; orns@btconnect.com

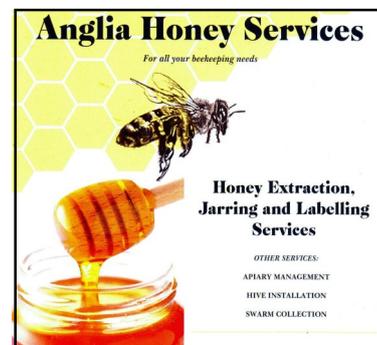
Anglia Honey Services

Honey extraction, jarring and labelling services and hive management:

Hill House,
Framingham Earl Road,
Yelverton,
Norfolk NR14 7PD

Tel 01508 491115 or
07711 517896

angliahoneyservices@yahoo.com



Forthcoming Events

All future events are being held online until further notice because of COVID-19.

Please see regular emails from the Secretary for further information.